DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 397 949 PS 024 273

AUTHOR Johnston, Betty
TITLE Fostering Meaningful Teacher Interactions among Primary and Junior Teachers through Collegial Efforts.
PUB DATE 95
NOTE 86p.; Ed.D. Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Quality; Elementary Education; *Elementary School Teachers; *Interpersonal Relationship; *Professional Isolation; Rapport; *Staff Development; Stress Variables; Teacher Administrator Relationship; Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Collaboration
IDENTIFIERS *Professional Communication; *Teacher Needs

ABSTRACT

The rapport among teachers can be a significant determinant of educational quality and workplace atmosphere. A practicum project sought to improve professional communication among staff at an urban, public elementary school where teachers did not have opportunities to meaningfully interact with one another. The staff in this school consisted of a male principal, a female vice-principal, 35 teachers, 4 teaching assistants, 2 secretaries, and 2 custodians. The decision to host six preservice teacher candidates permitted an opportunity to solve the problem. Over the 8-month period, 3 types of teacher interactions were initiated: professional cooperation, "Tea and Tidbits," a professional circle to discuss classroom practice, and shared space partnership. In post-project asssessments, teachers reported an increased number of conversations. Insights into education due to conversations and planning with colleagues were not apparent. While teachers appeared to agree that staff modeled behavior they hoped children would emulate, a discrepancy was noted in the fieldnotes between what the teachers agreed on and what they did. Although the practicum met only one of four objectives, it demonstrated how experienced teachers and preservice teacher candidates could initiate collegiality. (Contains 48 references.) (MOK)

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Fostering Meaningful Teacher Interactions Among Primary and Junior Teachers through Collegial Efforts

by

Betty Johnston

Cluster 56

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A Practicum II Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

1995

PS 024273

PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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Course Director for Practicum Courses - York University

Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada

October 17, 1995
Date

This practicum report was submitted by Betty Johnston under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Approved:

October 30, 1995
Date of Final Approval of Report

Ann E. Fordham
Ann E. Fordham, Ed.D. Adviser

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Many individuals contributed to the completion of this practicum. The teachers, preservice teacher candidates and administration involved in the practicum were responsible for the assisting in this effort. Colleagues on staff and in the Board were good enough to ask about my progress and their comments were encouraging. Friends frequently inquired into the status of my progress and these discussions gave me impetus to continue. Ann Fordham's assistance was valuable and her suggestions were positive. To each one of you I am truly grateful. Thanks to each one of these people for their input and good faith in me.

Most of all, this practicum could not have been completed without the co-operation of my sister, Bernice, whose confidence in its completion kept me focussed. Sincere thanks.

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ABSTRACT

Fostering Meaningful Teacher Interactions among Primary and Junior Teachers through Collegial Efforts. Johnston, Betty., 1995: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Teacher Isolation/Collegiality/Teacher Education/Elementary Education.

In an urban, public elementary school, teachers did not have opportunities to meaningully interact with one another. The decision to host six preservice teacher candidates permitted an opportunity to solve the problem. Over the eight month practicum period, three types of teacher interactions were initiated: professional co-operation, tea and tidbits, shared space partnership.

Results indicated that teachers did report an increased number of conversations. Insights into education due to conversations and planning with colleagues were not apparent. While teachers appeared to agree that staff modelled behavior they hoped children would emulate, a discrepency was noted in the fieldnotes between what teachers agreed on and what they did.

Although this practicum met only one of four outcomes, it demonstrated how experienced teachers and preservice teacher candidates could initiate collegiality.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The term 'school' conjures up a picture of a building in the mind's eye but as soon as people talk about 'school', they relate their experiences 'at school'. Integral to these stories are the teachers who work in the school. It becomes impossible, therefore, to discuss a 'school' without placing it within the context of the teachers who work there.

The school in this practicum was an elementary school which educated kindergarten to Grade 8 students. It was situated in a middle class urban area and its doors opened to 500 children and 45 adults each day. The staff consisted of a male principal, a female vice-principal, 35 teachers, four teaching assistants and two secretaries as well as two custodians.

The building was a long rectangle which sat at the end of a residential street. Children and teachers who worked in the kindergarten through Grade 3 as well as the teachers and students in Grade 7 and 8 occupied classrooms in the long rectangle. Part of the playground adjacent to the building housed eight portable classrooms. The classes for Grades 4,5 and 6 were situated in these portable classrooms.

Sixteen of the 20 teachers on staff were responsible for teaching

children attending kindergarten through Grade 6. Due to pregnancy leaves, one of the Grade 2 teachers was replaced by an experienced substitute teacher whose contract ended in December, 1994 and a Grade 4 teacher was replaced in November, 1994, by a first year teacher. There were 11 classroom teachers in the primary division (kindergarten to Grade 3) and six classroom teachers in the junior division (Grade 4 to Grade 6). Eleven teachers worked at the school for four years or more. All of the primary and junior grade teachers were female except for one male, Grade 5 teacher. The principal had been at the school for seven years and the vice principal was placed in the school as of September, 1994.

Both the primary and junior divisions had a lead teacher who was appointed in June, 1994. These teachers were new to the school and had approximately three years teaching experience. The lead teachers were responsible for holding a division meeting each month and for ensuring decisions were made within the division. They also were responsible for ordering teacher requirements and satisfying the professional development needs for their division.

This meant that every third Tuesday of any school month, the primary division teachers met in the school library and every third Monday of any school month, the six junior teachers met in the school library. One teacher had to attend both meetings since she worked in a split Grade 3-4 classroom. The primary division teachers were seen as a cohesive group

while the junior division teachers were considered unruly.

The staff was hardworking and seldom congregated in the staffroom except on Thursday mornings when treats were served. People were cordial to one another and friendly to one another. While certain staff members felt more comfortable talking to specific people, there were no cliques or open arguments amongst staff members. A visit to the staff room on a Thursday morning would lead one to believe that the staff was congenial.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

As a member of the 'old guard' in the school, the author was considered to have worked at the school for some time. Experience in the school amongst the 'old guard' was measured in terms of arrival at the school before or after the principal's appointment. The author was hired by the principal and had worked at the school for six years.

During that time, the author had taught a split Grade 2-3 class. In the 1994-1995 year, the author was teaching a Grade 2 class. While the author had never been a lead teacher in the school, staff who were considered to be 'good teachers' by the principal were placed in split grades.

The school year, 1994-1995, brought the introduction of preservice teacher candidates into the school. Staff had agreed during the previous year to host student teachers in classes for observation and practice teaching

sessions. The school became one of six locations where preservice teacher candidates would receive classroom experience. According to the University's model, an adjunct professor was required to co-ordinate and evaluate the preservice teacher candidates during their stay at the school. A request from the principal to share the responsibility of adjunct professor with a junior division teacher came as a surprise to the author.

Being an adjunct professor gave one a title in the school and thus, the teacher's role was redefined. Acceptance of the position meant monitoring and organizing weekly classroom experiences for three teacher candidates in the Primary classrooms. Since no one at the school had ever been given the responsibilities of an adjunct professor, the junior grade teacher and the author were working through the process for the first time. Time during the summer was taken to decide upon dates for observation of the teacher candidates for the Fall term. While the author had worked at a university with responsibilities in teacher training, the duties required of an adjunct professor were different. As a classroom teacher, the position of adjunct professor was viewed as an additional responsibility. This was most apparent in the allocation of salary to the position by the university. Since the junior teacher shared the responsibility, the salary was divided equally between both people.

In spite of the extra responsibility, the idea of integrating teacher education into a school location was very appealing to the author. The

position provided an opportunity for the metaphor an extended family to be introduced to the school. Just like the child who watched, listened and assisted with duties under the supervision of several experienced relations, the preservice teacher candidates would move between all teachers in the primary division in order to make sense of educating young children. The extended family metaphor affected the salary provided for the adjunct professor. Since the family shared in the work, it was entitled to enjoy the profits. For this reason, the university was asked to forward the adjunct professor's salary to the school and this money would be available for professional development of primary division teachers. In this way, teachers were responsive to sharing in the requirements of working with preservice teacher candidates.

While the primary division teachers accepted the model in which everyone would share in working with teacher candidates, the junior division adjunct professor placed each of the three teacher candidates assigned to Grade 4,5 and 6 with a host teacher. Each teacher candidate would remain with the host teacher for observation and practice teaching for the duration of their placement. Six teacher candidates were assigned to the school from September until December, 1994 and six teacher candidates were assigned to the school from January, 1995 until June, 1995. All of the other five schools who worked with teacher candidates followed the traditional practice teaching model which the junior division adjunct

professor used.

The introduction of a revised model of teacher education was in character with the author's experience in the school. She had gained a reputation for working hard and had gained the respect of the staff for her initiatives in solving problems in the school. Changes initiated by the author, since arriving at the school, had resulted in: the redefinition of the Christmas concert to become an arts exhibition; the definition of behaviors to fit developmental standards according to specific items on the primary and junior progress reports for students; the purchase of mathematical and scientific manipulative materials for the primary and junior grades, the purchase of orff instruments for use in the primary classrooms.

Staff who worked with the author realized that she had worked in elementary education as well as a faculty of education and that her 20 years of teaching experience had prompted working at a National Defense School in Germany as well as working in an isolate school in a northern Canadian province.

Like most of the staff, the author was occupied with teaching in her classroom. This required preparing for lessons and tidying up and preparing for the next day. The added responsibility of being an adjunct professor found the author in a dilemma. The model that was introduced to the primary teachers required teacher interaction but the majority of time the author spent at school, found her working on her own, in her own

classroom. This pattern of work was typical of the staff in the school.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Teachers are busy people (Jackson, 1968) whose behaviors are governed by specific daily timetables. The responsibility of working with students requires the teacher to be punctual, to provide interesting experiences in the classroom and to ensure learning occurs. For these reasons, teachers have little time to interact with one another. It appears that daily existence as a classroom teacher promotes teacher isolation. The problem that existed was that the teachers at the elementary school level did not have frequent, meaningful professional interactions.

Problem Documentation

Evidence to support the lack of meaningful interactions that elementary teachers experience was gathered via a teacher questionnaire (see Appendix A) completed by 15 teachers who work in classrooms in from Grades 1 through 6 in the school. The following results supported the statement of the problem.

The results of the questionnaire indicated that only 8 of the 15 teachers actually engaged in, between one to three interchanges, each week concerning professional issues.

The questionnaire results also indicated that only 1 of the 15 teachers

gained insights into education due to the conversations which occurred at school. The results of the same questionnaire revealed that none of the teachers engaged in conversations in which they planned together. The questionnaire prompted 4 of the 15 teachers to not agree with the statement that the staff effectively modelled the type of community that it would be well for children to emulate.

Causative Analysis

This problem may have developed due to the architecture of the school. The placement of one teacher in each classroom and the requirement that teachers work in portables, placed outside the main building, as single classrooms does little to promote meaningful interactions amongst staff members.

Another cause may be that females dominate the teaching profession but their voices are discouraged in educational discussions. Since the administrative responsibility for the school remains with a traditional 'male' principal and 31 of the 35 staff are female, this school can be considered typical in terms of the power structure which exists. In this situation, the influence of female practice may be disregarded and meaningful interaction, therefore, is discouraged.

A further cause may be related to the discouragement of collegiality during preservice teacher training. Every teacher can remember their

practice teaching experiences. Since the host teacher frequently is the person who evaluates the student teacher, the rapport between the two is superficial. The student teacher is expected to perform like an experienced teacher and is criticized if assistance is sought. The initial experiences as a student teacher, in the schools, set the standard for future interactions. A weak teacher is one who asks for help while the strong teacher is independent and requires no assistance. The entry experiences that teachers encounter in their career do little to foster meaningful interactions as professionals.

Consideration that Western culture promotes competition between individuals may also be a cause for the lack of meaningful interactions amongst teachers. The mentality of the Western cultures to 'succeed' is demonstrated in views held about career opportunities. In order to be promoted, teachers perform workshops, write articles or earn degrees which are indirectly related to classroom practice. Teachers who are promoted are removed from classroom practice. Since the number of positions outside the classroom is limited, it is necessary to compete for these positions. People who receive the most recognition, in regards to advancement in education, must network with the power brokers (trustees, parents, principals) and not with colleagues. Since a staff is made up of professionals at all levels of their careers, one is never certain what the motives of particular individuals are. The lack of meaningful relationships

which exist on staff may result due to the expectations that individuals hold regarding their careers.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

While individuals within schools may consider isolation is unique to their situation, it has been recognized within the literature for 20 years. Lortie (1975) mentioned the existence of teachers according to the architectural design of schools. The walls that are constructed in educational settings serve as a barrier to teacher interaction and cause teachers to work alone. The walls also ensure the allocation of one person into a specific space and re-enforces the idea that a single teacher is responsible for a group of children. This manifests itself in a lack of understanding concerning the lived experience of a specific teacher within the classroom (Rothberg, 1986).

In spite of recent efforts to provide preparation time for teachers and thereby, schedule other teachers to work with a class, teachers, even in the '90's, report working alone (Huberman, 1992). This situation appears to be common to schools in spite of the level of education one teaches at or the country. Huberman's work (1992) with secondary school teachers in Geneva, Switzerland, found 90% of the teachers reporting that they worked alone.

While the architecture of schools may contribute to teacher isolation

(Dana, 1993), reference to the habits of teachers appears to provide an alternative explanation. Little (1988) refers to the mindset that teachers develop. This allows colleagues to borrow materials but not to interfere in someone's teaching. According to this rationale, it is not so much the space that is private but rather the acts which are carried on that make teaching private and therefore, isolate teachers. This view was supported in an earlier study by Tye and Tye (1984). Teachers reported that they worked alone in classrooms and made decisions based upon their own experiences and background in order to implement curriculum.

An alternative viewpoint was proposed by Flinders (1988) who saw teacher isolation as an adaptive strategy in order to survive the rigour of daily life in the school. Flinders explained that teachers build cocoons in their classrooms and in so doing, they are able to accomplish their professional workload. Flinders would view isolation as a necessary by-product of teaching.

In spite of the way teacher isolation is studied, the literature appears to draw the conclusion that it has a negative effect upon life in schools. "Isolation breeds isolation" suggested some researchers (Zielinski & Hoy, 1983, p. 35). Their survey of elementary teachers' connections to powerful figures within the school resulted in 83% of the teachers reporting that they had no link with powerful individuals. This finding lead them to conclude that lack of communication between administration

and teachers became a revolving circle in which both parties failed to influence one another.

Bennett's discussion of isolation (1988) pointed out that problems related to educating students are linked to teacher isolation. From personal experience, Bennett reported the negative effects of isolation and she called into question the idea of the classroom as a learning environment.

Given the acknowledgement of teacher isolation as a problem discussed in the literature, consideration of which groups of teachers are isolated will provide evidence to support the lack of meaningful professional interactions amongst educators.

Who is Isolated?

Sakharov and Farber (1983) examined childhood teachers and connected isolation to burnout. They explained that stress caused teachers to isolate themselves in classrooms. Teachers were so busy with children that they seldom had time to talk with colleagues. Given that the majority of teachers working with young children are female, the question of whether females are more susceptible to burnout than males arises. Calabrese and Anderson (1986) investigated levels of stress reported by teachers and found that females experienced more stress than males in public schools. The responsibilities for women as mothers, professionals and housekeepers created stress. The lack of opportunity to interact with one another was considered as a contributor to stress.

Fullan (1993) discussed the isolation of first year teachers. The transition from student to professional is described as a "stage in which little support is provided" (Fullan, 1993, p. 56). The first year teachers were left to engage in their own professional development in order to ward off the isolation of the classroom. These circumstances, according to Fullan, do not change as teachers gain experience. Rather, teachers become resigned to the reality of professional development.

Hargreaves (1994) suggested that the patterns of behaviors which teachers engaged in required further attention. He saw isolation as "individualism" and described the term as "personal actions which enhance the ability to teach" (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 172). Hargreaves promoted a positive view of isolation and explained that if the majority of teachers preferred to withdraw from one another, the fault lies with the social systems that develop in school and not with the individual. While Hargreaves presented an enlightening view of isolation, twisting the notion may forge efforts in another direction and leave the problem of teacher isolation festering.

Factors Affecting Teacher Isolation:

A number of factors relating to the lack of interactions appear to be discussed in the literature. The review of literature which follows suggests that a variety of reasons have been discovered related to the topic.

Teaching is frequently considered to be a stressful occupation

(Schlanscher, 1987). When stress is experienced as a negative influence, a change in personality has been thought to occur and isolation results. Holt, Fine and Tollefson (1987) examined teacher burnout and found that female elementary teachers experienced high stress. Teachers who experienced high stress and high burnout were likely to get angry, think about their problems and cut out activities. Redgwell's discussion of burnout (1992) elaborated upon the notion of "emotional exhaustion". According to Redgwell, this occurred when a person is overextended and this caused the person to act upon assumptions of others and withdraw from social interaction.

One might conclude that stress will be relieved through talk. Holt, Fine and Tollefson (1987) found that high stress and low burnout teachers spent time talking to a close friend. Little (1990) questioned whether talk is beneficial since her study of teacher interactions found that story telling was a safe way to communicate with others. Talk appeared to serve to re-enforce personal views. This type of talk maintained teacher independence and therefore, maintained teacher isolation.

While studies related to teacher stress centre upon factors in educational settings which cause isolation, an alternative cause has been postulated. Huberman (1992) suggested that the career cycle experienced by teachers caused a negative or positive outlook to develop which affected interactions amongst staff. Teachers who made few changes in their

instruction as they gained experience and teachers who were involved in innovating change within a district were less satisfied with their career as they gained experience. This caused teachers to become more conservative and to hold on to what they had. As these individuals gained experience, they complained more frequently and disengaged from the situation they taught in.

Another cause of the lack of teacher interaction suggests that the school is a social context in which females are perceived to be powerless. Casey and Apple (1989) discussed the roles that females took as professionals. They note that as a teacher, the female is perceived in a maternal role. Since this role is not considered to be professional, the voices of females are not taken seriously by administration. Robertson (1992) expands upon the discussion of voices in the school context. She suggested that women expressed their ideas tentatively as opposed to the confident manner males reflected in conversations. This resulted in female's ideas being given little consideration. Within the hostile environment of masculine domination, the female becomes silent.

This notion concerning the struggle to hear the female voice in the school emerges in literature related to personal narrative. Neilsen (1992) used a metaphor to describe the teaching act as a lonely gardener. In order to understand teaching, one must engage in the effort but advancement within the profession would require leaving the garden plot. The

knowledge of the worker is thought to become secondary and if advancement is to occur, it would require rejecting the teaching act and adopting the role of overseer.

The review of literature which relates to the lack of meaningful interactions experienced by teachers has accumulated within several areas of study: psychology, sociology, school reform and teacher development. This gives an indication that the problem is real and requires a solution.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goal and Expectations

The goal which follows and the outcomes listed below were projected for this practicum.

Teachers in classrooms in an elementary school will undertake frequent meaningful professional interactions amongst themselves. When opportunities for teachers to meet together become a part of everyday life in a school, new understandings concerning education will be reached due to the discussions .

Expected Outcomes

To attain the goal, the following four outcomes were defined.

1. The results of a questionnaire (see Appendix B) will indicate that the median number of teachers, which is 8 of the 15 teachers, will increase the number of interchanges concerning professional issues to four or five each week.

2. The results of the same questionnaire will indicate that 3 of the 15 teachers will gain insights into education due to the conversations which occur at school.

3. The results of the questionnaire will indicate that 4 of the 15

teachers will engage in conversations in which they plan together.

4. The results of the questionnaire will indicate that all 15 teachers agree that the staff effectively models the type of community that would be well for children to emulate.

Measurement of Outcomes

A questionnaire (see Appendix B) was placed in primary and junior division classroom teacher's mailboxes in the school office during the third week of the eighth month of the practicum. Each staff member was asked to complete the questionnaire and return it to the author's mailbox at school before the end of the week. It was expected that all 15 questionnaires distributed to the teachers would be returned, indicating a 100% return rate. While this return rate appeared to be high, all teachers were expected to return the questionnaire since the form consisted of only three questions which appeared on the original questionnaire (see Appendix A). The shortened questionnaire (see Appendix B) was employed because the findings from the original questionnaire suggested that three questions would yield enlightening information concerning staff interactions.

Question 8 on the original questionnaire asked teachers to circle a level of agreement regarding how effectively the staff modelled the type of community that children would emulate. This question became question 1 on the shortened questionnaire (see Appendix B). to determine the vision that the teachers held related to professional interaction. Question 11 on

the original questionnaire asked teachers to choose one of five topics of conversation that they frequently engaged in while at school. This question appeared as question 2 on the shortened questionnaire (see Appendix B). . Question 12 on the original questionnaire asked teachers to choose the number of interactions they engaged in that related to professional issues in one week. This question appeared as question 3 on the shortened questionnaire (see Appendix B).

The three questions that appeared on the shortened questionnaire were chosen due to the results of the original questionnaire which the staff completed. Question 1 (see Appendix B) attempted to determine the vision that the teachers held related to professional interaction. This was central in determining whether a change occured. Questions 2 and 3 gave a measure of teacher behaviors which reflected meaningful interactions. While the questionnaire consisted of only three questions, the scores which were tabulated permitted determining whether a change occured and whether the outcomes were met.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

As stated in Chapter II, the problem being considered was that teachers at the elementary school level did not have frequent, meaningful professional interactions. Lemke (1993) advanced the notion that learning occurred due to social interactions. This definition required rethinking the occurrence of teacher talk in schools. Lemke's definition pointed to the importance of teachers discussing professional topics at school as a part of their daily interactions.

Literature was available from academic and school settings which provided solutions to the problem of teacher isolation. Rothberg (1986) recommended that teachers get together to discuss professional reading or teaching techniques. This ethnographic study which monitored building positive interactions among teachers allowed them to articulate their beliefs and values. These activities assisted teachers in building a community of learners.

The idea that teachers should form groups was discussed in a number of ways in the literature. Nias (1985) examined groups of teachers in British schools. She discovered that teachers joined and were influenced by the group they belonged to. Nias pointed out the significance of talk in helping members come to understand practice.

One of the popular terms used to describe a group was "learning organization" (Senge, 1990, p.3). According to his definition, this group can be identified by its ability to solve problems and this permits continuous learning. The emphasis on becoming a team and using the energy of the group to work out existing problems is crucial to becoming the type of group that Senge (1990) discussed. Brown and Phillips (1994) referred to factors used by business to create groups that reflect a common purpose. They, too, pointed to the need for teamwork. However, the idea of a team requires one to ask which comes first, the team or the problem?

Another way of thinking about a teacher group has been advanced by using the term "community of learners" (Barth, 1990, p.43). He saw these groups as a means of professional development. Rather than a top down model of professional development, Barth advocated giving ownership for professionalism to the teachers. When teachers become responsible for learning from one another, Barth suggested they would gain a deeper understanding of their practice and this would replenish their spirits.

Central to the formation of groups is the need for talk. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1992) discussed the need for small talk. This chatter which appeared to be unrelated to education is indeed, important, since it allowed the individuals to establish a network for communicating. The sense of camaraderie was essential in belonging to the group.

This contribution of talk within the group fosters collegiality. Little

(1982) examined collegiality according to observations of staff behavior and noted that teachers who worked in collegial schools engaged in discussions about practice in a number of locations. The discussions motivated teachers to plan curriculum together, prepare activities together and observe one another.

There appeared to be a degree of uncertainty about how collegial teachers are. According to Hargreaves (1994), collaborative efforts are maintained and developed due to teacher initiatives. However, Hargreaves pointed out that when administrators mandate collegiality, another form of collegial relation developed. This, he called "contrived collegiality" (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 195). Teachers might appear to be working together but the personal incentives and informal communication network was absent so the relationship was flawed.

Examination of a group of teachers (Vermont University, 1992) showed that teachers, at first, were content to adjust existing teaching. The ability to express themselves professionally was critical to the rethinking of their professional beliefs.

The idea that meaningful interaction will occur as soon as teachers are given opportunities to talk was naive. Barth (1990) described the existence of three types of teachers in schools: "teachers who are unwilling to examine practice, teachers who are willing to use their own practice to understand education and teachers who will make practice accessible to

others" (Barth, 1990, p. 153). It seemed that the literature presented a vision of what was supposed to occur in schools but the intricacies of the interactions needed to be given attention.

Nias, Southworth and Campbell (1992) outlined four conditions to facilitate curriculum development by teachers. Their observations of teachers who developed curriculum together suggested that a sense of common purpose would promote collaborative efforts. This enabled pairs of individuals to begin to work together and to control the amount of time and materials as well as seek supportive people to create conditions for success. The leadership which encouraged the relationship came from teachers who were recognized for their leadership by colleagues. There seemed, therefore, a question related to the kinds of control administration have, in enabling collaboration. Whether principals must completely withdraw from the schools as Fullan (1993) recommended or whether administration can positively influence teacher relationships as described by Stefaniuk (1991) is debatable. Perhaps, it is not only the teachers who must readjust their focus, but the principals as well. The direction of communication might reverse itself so that teachers create the conversations and the principals act upon the decisions which emerge from the conversations (Leslie, 1989). What appeared to be clear is that collaboration occurred when teachers felt confident enough to develop their own communities. Cooper (1988) discussed the futility of forcing

individuals to become a group. People in their own way and time would become a group on their own. However, it was necessary to ask how individuals come to join professional groups.

Discussion around the topic of collaboration is required since it was from this literature that models for teachers appeared. There are a number of ways that teachers can interact with one another in schools. In fact, the entire context of the setting changes when teachers become collegial. While no definitive way of interacting has been proven to be more effective in encouraging teacher interaction, a range of possibilities emerged from the literature.

Opportunities to share understandings of classroom practice might occur through "professional circles" (Barney, 1985, p.125). He recommended scheduling a specific time for professional circle meetings. The activities which are planned should enhance teachers' professional lives.

In Diamond's work (1991) with teachers in New Zealand, he used repertory grids in order for teachers to examine their practice. Teachers were given three terms (mother, child, teacher) and asked to consider how two terms were similar and one was different. This allowed teachers opportunities to reflect and discuss their practice and provided a way for beliefs to emerge.

Another model which encouraged teachers to examine practice was

given the name "classroom-based teacher development" (Thiessen, 1992,p.85). This permitted teachers to work alone as action researchers, with a partner as a co-operative partnership or with students as an educational enterprise. In schools where change was found to be occurring, the teachers were given the option of choosing one of the three forms of professional development (Bradley, 1994).

The suggestion that professional development should be designed by teachers themselves was advanced by Clark (1992). This responsibility permitted teachers to create the agenda from their activities. It was recommended that teachers begin by sharing practices that they performed well. Among the list of recommendations was the idea that the teachers should "go first class" in gaining self respect (Clark, 1992,p.82).

An alternative model of teacher interaction has been proposed by teacher educators, Quisenberry and Partridge (1993). They outlined the need for teacher education programs to ensure that preservice teachers engage in collaborative efforts with teachers. The linking of theory and practice has caused teacher educators to initiate teacher preservice training within schools (Talbot, 1991). Becoming the reflective practitioner that Schon (1982) envisioned requires the preservice student to move beyond modelling their host teacher's practice and to become a creator of a personal vision of 'teacher'. In order for this to occur, the host teacher must become a counsellor who assists the preservice teacher in extending

ideas about classroom practice.

The placement of preservice teachers in schools has emerged from school reform efforts in the United States (Duquette & Cook, 1994). Sites where teacher education faculty, teachers and preservice students work in unison, have been referred to as professional development schools. Fager, Andrews, Sheppard and Quinn (1993) reported on the efforts of two co-operating teachers who worked with a preservice student teacher in a professional development school They concluded that teachers working with preservice teachers offered an opportunity to become allies. Integrating preservice teachers into a co-operative effort that teachers are involved in holds another possibility for teachers to communicate among themselves.

Understanding teacher isolation required consideration of teachers who engaged in meaningful interactions as well as teachers who maintained their isolation. Bradley's report (1994) found that while there were instances of co-operation, some teachers continued to remain unchanged. To understand isolation, it is necessary to gain a perspective on teachers who maintain their privacy as well as teachers who share. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) would suggest that teacher narratives concerning the life experiences of teachers are integral to understanding the teacher. The life experiences that one brings to the classroom affect the behavior of the professional. To truly understand someone, it is necessary to know their

past. Since, teachers are considered professionals, they may never engage in conversations which uncover the experiences of their colleagues. For this reason, the relationship between teachers remains superficial and communication is limited. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1988), teacher talk can begin in the stories that teachers tell about their lives in and out of school. Layers of meaning will be revealed and true understanding of colleagues can begin in these narratives.

The review of the literature suggested the need for teacher isolation to be addressed in the context of a school. It pointed to the requirement to devise solutions to the problems and it provided a number of ideas which were worthy of consideration in fostering meaningful interaction among teachers.

Description of Selected Solution

The literature provided opportunities to combat teacher isolation in a number of ways.

The context of working with preservice teachers offered an opportunity for teachers to participate in teacher education (Talbot, 1991). Since preservice teachers were placed in the school, there was an opportunity for all teachers in the primary division to assist in training teachers. Over 32 weeks, three preservice teacher candidates would rotate amongst three teachers in each of the grades in the primary division-Grades

1,2 and 3-and each preservice teacher candidate would spend four weeks in each grade level. Kindergarten classes did not participate in the teacher training program, since children in these classes began three weeks later than the rest of the school and the teachers felt the effort to accommodate children to school required their full attention. The teachers involved in teacher training across Grades 1,2 and 3 were required to co-ordinate visits within their classes and to ensure that a range of teaching related to the curriculum would be observed and practised by the preservice teachers. Visits to individual classrooms to observe preservice teachers working with students would encourage teacher interaction between the adjunct professor, teacher and preservice teacher. Monitoring the progress of preservice teachers would require discussion among and with classroom teachers.

It was also necessary to assist the preservice teachers in reaching an understanding of practice. This was attempted by holding 15 minute reflective discussions once each month. These sessions were tape recorded in order to note the change of individual ideas about practice. Each month, each preservice teacher was asked to reflect upon the question, "What is teaching?" Over the 15 minute discussion, the adjunct professor would ask each preservice teacher to explain their ideas, give examples, apply metaphors and consider different aspects of their practice in order to expand their definition of teaching.

Observations, teacher comments and preservice teacher understandings were recorded in the fieldnotes.

The training of preservice teachers allowed for the formation of a "professional circle" (Barney, 1995,p.125) in order to discuss classroom practice. In this school, the "professional circle" would take the form of 'Tea and Tidbits'. Tea and Tidbits would be served once a week after school for a half hour in the staff room in order that teachers and preservice teacher candidates would have an opportunity to discuss classroom practice. These sessions were organized by inviting all staff to the session each week via a notice in each staff member's and preservice teacher candidate's mailbox in the school office. The topic of the discussion for the week was placed on the invitation. Teachers and the preservice teachers could suggest topics for discussion so that the agenda would arise from their needs. As an adjunct professor, the author would invite all of the staff to meetings and introduce the topic. A record of the discussion points would be kept by the author throughout the gatherings. Preparation of the tidbits and provision of china for the session was provided by the author.

The idea of establishing a teaching partnership with a colleague on staff allowed a collaborative model of teaching to be presented to staff, administration, parents and children. This model represented "classroom based professional development" (Thiessen, 1992,p.85). Since each teacher

in the school was assigned a class.oom, a collaborative teaching model required sharing space. During the 1994-1995 school year, the author and another Grade Two teacher would share classrooms. This permitted one classroom to become a communications room and one classroom to become a mathematics room. A schedule which ensured that both classes used each room for a large block of time each day was devised by the teachers. Each month, a parent letter was sent home informing parents about the activities available for children in each room for the month. The teachers were required to meet to plan the learning activities and to set long range plans for the year. The routines and contributions of materials were integral to this model. Both teachers were required to share materials and practice in order to allow the model to work. Monitoring the shared space effort would occur via field notes kept by the author.

Attention to the teacher's voice through professional development activities as outlined by Clark (1992) prompted teachers to take responsibility for reversing the direction of communication within the school. Three days each year were allowed for in-school professional development and teachers were asked to suggest topics and activities for these days. Lead teachers acted upon the teacher suggestions and scheduled activities for these days. It was during these days that the salary of the adjunct professor would be used to assist with professional development activities. The sharing of the teacher training among all of the Primary

division teachers permitted allocation of the salary to the division. The author would ensure that the money was available by requesting that the university forward a cheque to the school. It was also the author's responsibility to monitor teacher conversations and meetings in order to become aware of possible activities which the primary division teachers suggested or referred to during conversations. The opportunity to plan professional development and to access money without administrative budget approval would liberate the teachers to allocate the money towards projects initiated by the primary division. The dates for professional development were set by the Board of Education, but the topic and schedules depended upon the teachers' decisions. The professional development session(s) were referred to as 'professional co-operation' during the practicum. Information relating to these activities was recorded in the fieldnotes.

These solutions were implemented over a 32 week period in the school in order to promote interaction among teachers. At the end of the 32 weeks, a questionnaire was distributed among the teachers in the primary and junior divisions. While the types of teacher interactions were specific, the agenda for each was flexible to allow the teachers and preservice teachers opportunities to set the agenda. According to Fullan (1992) working with teachers requires sharing the vision. The calendar of activities provided teachers with opportunities to interact with one another

in meaningful ways.

Report of the Action Taken

Four types of interaction were devised in order that classroom teachers could interact within the school: professional co-operation, Tea and Tidbits, teacher training and shared space partnership. The number of teachers who were involved in a specific interaction varied. All teachers, administration and preservice teachers were invited to Tea and Tidbits. Professional co-operation and teacher training interactions were planned for Primary Division teachers since the author was responsible for preservice teacher candidates in the Primary Division and another teacher was responsible for Junior grade preservice teacher candidate placements. One type of interaction-the shared space partners-limited itself to the author and another teacher in the same grade. All four types of interaction were scheduled during the 1994-1995 school year. During this time preservice teacher candidates were in the school 2-3 days each week and completed three practice teaching blocks which lasted over two and three week periods. The calendar plan served to ensure that interactions occurred throughout the practicum. While all four types of interaction allowed teachers to discuss practice, each was unique and deserves elaboration by itself.

Professional Co-operation:

Three opportunities for professional co-operation between Primary staff occurred during the practicum. These activities were planned during the three professional development days set by the Board of Education. Professional co-operation activities depended upon the Primary Division teacher's needs during the practicum.

The first professional co-operation activity prompted a 3 hour meeting in which teachers reacted to portfolios which all Primary teachers had received in September from the Board and were expected to complete. The teachers expressed concern over how and when they could complete these documents. The Board expectation was that teachers would have a 2 year phase-in timeline to develop strategies and become accustomed to the portfolios. These portfolios were to be used as a way to show student progress to parents. Since the primary teachers were the first professionals in the Board to receive the portfolios, other divisions within the school were less interested in the topic. The stress created by the portfolios allowed the author to propose that the Primary Division teachers discuss the portfolios during the professional development day as a professional co-operation activity. This was accepted by the lead teacher and administration in the school.

An invitation (see Figure 1) was placed in all Primary teachers boxes to attend a Champagne Breakfast at the author's home. Orange juice with

champagne, blintz and tea and coffee were served. This allowed teachers to relax and prepared the group for participation during the meeting. The absence of the lead teacher due to illness necessitated that the vice principal lead the meeting. Teachers, in small groups, were asked to voice their concerns surrounding the portfolios. They were then asked to develop an ideal portfolio. The final discussion allowed teachers to invent ways to move from their concern to the ideal portfolio.

Figure 1

Invitation to November Professional Co-operation

Date: Friday, November 4th
(P.A. Day)

Time: 8:15 - 9:00

Place: Betty's

R.S.V.P. by Wednesday, November 2nd to Betty if unable to attend.

Following breakfast, we will meet as a division in this more comfortable setting from 9:00 - 11:30 to discuss Primary Portfolios and our upcoming Writing Evening.

Following lunch, we will all meet back at the school with our grade partners.

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Teachers left the meeting feeling calmer about the portfolios and encouraged about the strategies that they might try. One of the strategies formulated required teachers to work together in order to gather data for the portfolio. One teacher could give up a prep period to teach a class while the classroom teacher conducted a specific observation. This could then be reciprocated by the other teacher.

The second professional co-operation activity found the Primary teachers inviting an expert to the school to discuss 'Spelling'. The Primary Division teachers had decided to hold a session to inform parents about children's writing. The teachers were aware that the issue of teaching spelling would arise and wondered how to deal with it. They also needed time to plan the evening. The author suggested that the upcoming professional development day would present an opportunity to plan and to invite an expert to discuss 'Spelling' with the teachers. The Primary Division felt this was a good idea. The author contacted a university professor who had recently published a book on the topic and she spent the morning informing the Primary Division teachers about 'Spelling'. Another teacher made arrangements concerning a catered lunch. Lunch was provided at one of the teacher's houses and the afternoon was spent planning the session. Money required to pay the professor's fee and the luncheon was taken from the money received by the university related to the redirected adjunct professor's salary.

As a result of this professional co-operation activity, five primary teachers addressed parents during a large group parent information session concerning children's spelling at the parent education evening.. This was a change from previous parent education meetings when one teacher spoke to the parents. Following the large groups session, groups of two or three primary teachers worked in specific rooms with children to demonstrate writing activities which occurred at the school. The preservice teacher candidates set up activities for the children in the school library while parents were in the large group session and introduced parents to the published book that the children had written following the large group session. A publisher was also available in order that parents could purchase the professor's book concerning 'Spelling', since it was written to help parents understand how they could help their children to become better spellers.

The third professional co-operation activity did not occur on a professional development day but took place during school hours. This occurred due to the administrative responsibilities scheduled for the third professional development day. The third professional co-operation activity emerged due to both staff and student needs. It was held during the fourth week of the eighth month. The staff were completing administrative activities and were packing up classrooms for the summer holiday. The students had not attended a theatrical performance during the year. The

author suggested that a theatrical performance be booked for students to give classroom teachers an hour during the school day in which to complete administrative duties. The Special Education teachers and French teacher volunteered to attend the performance to replace classroom teachers in monitoring students. This activity allowed teachers and students to benefit. Funding for the performance was made available from the money redirected by the university relating to the adjunct professor's salary. This professional co-operation activity represented one change in the planned schedule.

Tea and Tidbits:

For the eight months that preservice teacher candidates worked in the school, Tea and Tidbits became a Thursday after school event. Invitations to Tea and Tidbits were placed in all of the teachers', administration's and preservice teacher candidates' mailboxes announcing the topic of discussion for the week. Tea and Tidbits was scheduled to begin at 3:15 and last for a half hour. The sessions were planned to better inform preservice teacher candidates about teaching. The first three topics of discussion were announced by the author but numbers of participants started to dwindle so the following Tea and Tidbits discussion encouraged teachers to suggest topics and evaluate initial efforts. These topics served for the following eight Tea and Tidbits sessions. The final Tea and Tidbits session asked for input concerning the model of preservice education at the

school.

Tea and Tidbits was held on 19 occasions throughout the practicum. Three additional sessions were scheduled within the original calendar. The extra Tea and Tidbits discussions occurred due to the teachers' willingness to attend. In order to keep track of conversations the author decided to record teacher comments in a school notebook. This action prompted the opportunity to become an observational participant in order that the discussion was not dominated by the author. Teachers were curious about what was recorded and at one point asked to hear what had been written. Information kept in the field notes described the request.

> April 17, 1995
>
> Someone asked if they could read my book when I finish. I laughed and said they would probably find it too boring. Someone, then, asked if I could read back the ideas presented. I did and the group seemed to take pleasure in hearing their words recorded on paper.

Flexibility concerning the time to start discussions was required. When several teachers arrived and had been served tea/coffee and a dessert, the discussion would begin. The author began each session by asking for input on the topic and after 30 minutes of discussion thanked people for contributing to the discussion. Teachers helped to tidy up Tea and Tidbits by emptying cups and putting them in a box to be taken home and washed

in a dishwasher. Preservice teacher candidates usually set out cups and treats and prepared tea and coffee. One teacher contributed two teapots for the sessions. Keeping the teapots full once Tea and Tidbits started became the responsibility of the author. All sessions were held in the staffroom and approximately 17 people attended each session. While the principal and vice principal were invited to all sessions, they never attended.

During discussions there were silent periods that were, at first, uncomfortable for the author. However, experience in monitoring the discussions demonstrated that eventually someone would make a comment and initiate further conversation. By the Spring, the author was amazed at how comfortable she was with silence during discussion and found it easy to wait for the conversation to begin again. One of the problems with the discussions was the habit of certain people to dominate the discussions. At times, the author would ask specified individuals to contribute in order to silence the constant talkers. While this would permit someone to enter into the discussion, the dominator would respond and begin again. This frustrated the author throughout the practicum.

Teacher Training

Discussions with teachers concerning teacher training became an impossibility throughout the practicum. Preservice teacher candidates were in the school two or three days each week and classroom teachers were often busy planning with them or putting up displays of children's work after school. Lunch hours required people to be on duty or allowed people to prepare for afternoon lessons. Mondays and Fridays were days when preservice teachers were not in the school and teachers frequently had other meetings to attend, spent time talking to parents, had personal commitments or were absent . This meant that discussions concerning teacher training were informal and unscheduled. They frequently were on a one-to-one basis. Comments recorded in the fieldnotes provide a glimpse of a discussion with a Grade 1 teacher in January.

> January 29, 1995
>
> I got round this week to talking to the Grade One teachers. 'P' was away with pneumonia still. Interesting that 'G' thought the first group of student teachers were into 'amusement' as a method of teaching. This group seems to be more practical. 'C' seems to be appreciated since one of the student teachers commented on how she had learned about handling social-emotional encounters from her. 'G' confided that she'd never say no to hosting student teachers but she really would like to

be with her children by herself. Mondays and Fridays are a relief because no one is bouncing into the class.

It was supposed that three preservice teacher candidates would be placed in the Primary Division. However, in December, four preservice teachers requested a placement in the school and this meant that preservice teachers were placed in kindergarten through Grade 3. The added responsibility of monitoring preservice teaching required juggling time for observation and discussion with preservice teachers. It also meant visiting with two half-day kindergarten teachers who shared a classroom. Since one of the teachers taught in the morning, it was difficult to talk to her as she was not available at recess. Observations of the four preservice teachers and discussion concerning reflection about teaching was scheduled in 15 minute time blocks on one afternoon each month. These reflections were tape recorded but time was not available to transcribe the tapes and provide insights to the preservice teachers concerning their views about teaching.

Shared Space Partners:

The decision by the author and another classroom teacher to share space necessitated two meetings each month. The planning of activities occurred during the fourth week of every month while the writing of the parent letter occurred during the first week of every month. The shared space model required the teachers to work together in setting up the

classrooms as well as planning long range objectives. These objectives were categorized on a grid according to centres and months. Objectives for mathematics, communications and environmental studies were completed in this way. This permitted the teachers to examine the objectives during the planning meeting and discuss a suitable activity. Planning sessions also allowed for discussion concerning trips outside of the school.

The fieldnotes provide a glimpse of the co-operation which occurred during the practicum. At times, the shared space partners found other staff becoming a part of their effort.

> January 22, 1995
>
> On the final Friday, 'M' and I were taking the children tobogganing and she made arrangements to take the special education children. The special education. teacher offered to make hotchocolate while we were gone. This seemed like 'tit for tat'. Teachers co-operate when one person does something for them and this makes for positive relationships.

However, not all associations were as positive as evidenced in the fieldnotes.

> January 22, 1995
>
> P.S. We're ('M' and I) battling it out with the Reading teacher. We have children who need help in reading but

she won't take them as group. We arranged reading in September so she could see the children and now she says the group is too large. What can we do? She's half time and feels taken advantage of. We had a meeting with the Vice Principal who was late on Wednesday morning. The bell rang before we resolved the problem. 'M' and I had to go so she and the V.P. solved the problem. She will now see four of our eight children who need assistance. 'M' and I will have to rearrange the reading program in order to absorb the four beginning readers.

The children within the shared space partnership were aware of the co-operation between the teachers and benefited from the arrangement.

February 19, 1995

'M' and I are trying to find a good book for modern fairy tales for March for the advanced readers. She went to Scholastic to look and ordered 10 copies of a short novel for her group. She's been good about setting up the pizza parlour. It's such a hit. I said I'd get English muffins this week for the pizza base but she said she would get them and give the bills to the office. Her children noticed that we went skating on Friday without them so asked when they were going. This Friday, they are coming too. Our trip to Casa Loma was a success. Thanks to all the parents who volunteered from

'M's' class we had sufficient supervision. That was such a nice trip and the children loved the castle.

The idea of working in the shared space model was to provide a collaborative teaching model within the school. This was accomplished when two preservice teacher candidates decided to teach as shared space partners in their final three week teaching block. This required that they plan together, set up activities and share materials. The shared space model found the two preservice teachers meeting during lunch hours and after school. They traded information concerning how lessons progressed and were supportive of one another.

The writing of newsletters to parents in order to inform them about activities, trips and/or contributions they might donate to the classrooms was formulated one evening during the first week of each month. The teacher responsible for setting up specific activities in either the math or communication room and therefore,chose to write the specific section of the newsletter she was responsible for. This meant that the teacher responsible for math activities wrote the mathematics section while the teacher responsible for communication activities wrote the section which informed parents about the genre of literature children would read that month, the focus on phonics for the month and the visual arts activities that would be available for the month. The teachers shared their sections by reading their draft of the parent letter to one another and proceeded to

compose the section related to environmental studies activities. The author would type the newsletter on 8 1/2" x 14" paper and her partner would Xerox copies for all parents. The newsletter was folded by each teacher to make a 8 1/2' x 7" pamphlet. Since both teachers taught Grade Two, the newsletter was called 'Two by Two'. Each child received a newsletter during the first week of each month to take home to their parent(s). Each child's name was printed on the top of the front of the newsletter in order to ensure that the newsletter reached home.

Specific Calendar:

While the calendar plan schedule outlined the weeks and activities which would occur during the practicum, a more specific calendar (see Appendix C) permitted showing the action taken in more explicit ways. Topics related to Tea and Tidbits have been placed within this calendar and the months during the school year have been added in order to provide a timeline related to the activities.

Unexpected Events

Although discussion of changes to the calendar plan have been referred to within the specific segments of the action taken, a summary of the events which occurred that altered the calendar plan will allow an understanding of the total picture of unexpected events which occurred throughout the eight months.

One change that was required was the necessity for all primary teachers to become involved in teacher education. Four preservice teacher candidates were placed in the school and this meant that kindergarten teachers were asked to host preservice teacher candidates. The addition of another preservice teacher candidate made it more difficult to meet with teachers in order to discuss on-going classroom experiences related to teacher development.

Another change to the calendar plan was the difficulty which resulted in meeting with classroom teachers on a regular basis. There were only two days when teacher candidates were not in the school each week. Since teachers were busy with other meetings, absent or had left for the day, it was impossible to discuss observations that classroom teachers had observed. For this reason, opportunities to discuss classroom observations became haphazard.

There was one change in the professional co-operation activities and this allowed teachers and students to benefit. In the fourth week of the eighth month the teachers were preparing final student records. The students had not attended a concert throughout the year. The author arranged for a concert to be held during school hours and the classroom teachers had one hour to complete records. Special education teachers and the French teacher supervised the children during the concert.

The unexpected event which had a major impact on the practicum

was the transfer of the original Principal to a new school in February and the placement of the Vice-Principal as the Principal. This change found the staff dealing with a different mode of communication. Since the original Principal hired several teachers from the school the staff was under constant stress concerning whether to leave or stay at the school.

Perhaps, most important is the necessity to realize that this practicum occurred over the course of one school year. Although the official date to begin the practicum was scheduled for January, 1995 in order to monitor teacher interaction, the practicum actually started in November, 1994 and finished in June, 1995. It was necessary to reach back into the records kept before January, 1995 in order to fulfil the eight month practicum requirement. Since several teachers on staff transferred and the preservice teacher candidates completed their studies in June, 1995, the school year took precedence in determining the eight month observation of teacher interactions.

These five changes represented the unexpected events which occurred across the practicum implementation.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

A solution to the problem that the teachers at the elementary school level did not have frequent meaningful professional interactions was considered throughout this practicum. This meant that opportunities for teachers to talk to one another were required in order that interaction could become a part of the school culture.

The first expected outcome of the practicum was stated as follows:

Outcome 1. The results of a questionnaire (see Appendix B) will indicate that the median number of teachers, which is 8 of the 15 teachers, will increase the number of interchanges concerning professional issues to four or five each week.

Question 3 on the shortened questionnaire (see Appendix B) permitted tallying the responses across four frequencies of interactions. Eleven of the 15 questionnaires were returned. Results indicated that 1 of the 11 teachers perceived that 1-3 interchanges occurred in one week while 5 of the 11 teachers perceived that they engaged in 4 or 5 interchanges during a week. It was also found that 3 of the 11 teachers perceived being involved in 6 or 7 interchanges in one week while 2 of the 11 teachers were involved in 8 or more interchanges in one week. Since only 1 of the 11 teachers checked a range of interactions less than 4-5 interchanges each

week, the results indicate that 10 of the 11 teachers had at least 4-5 interchanges each week. These results are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1

Interchanges perceived by Teachers in One Week

Frequency of Interchanges	Number of Teachers
1-3	1
4-5	5
6-7	3
8 or more	2

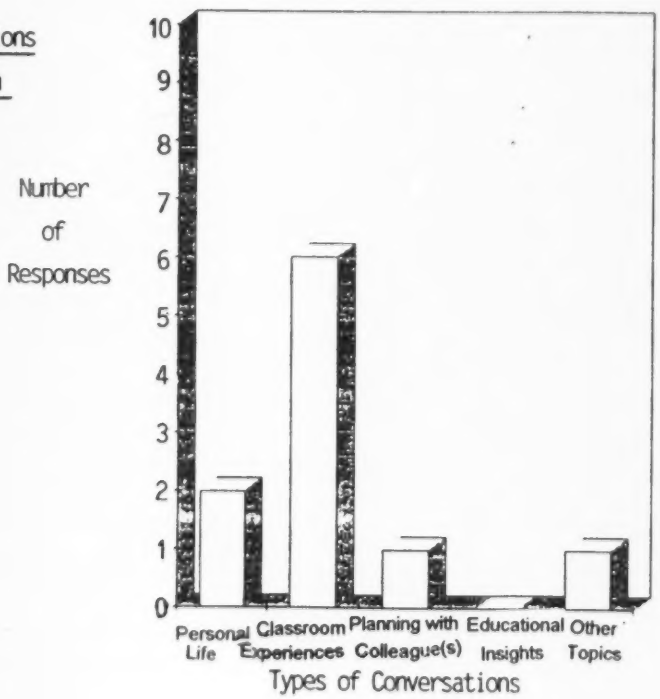
These results indicate that a mode of 5 was apparent in the 4-5 interchange range and that 5 teachers perceived having more than 4-5 interchanges in one week. While it was expected that 8 of the teachers would report having 4-5 interchanges, the result of 10 teachers having 4-5 interchanges or more in one week is beyond the expected outcome. Given these results,this outcome was met.

The second expected outcome was:

Outcome 2. The results of the same questionnaire will indicate that 3 of the 15 teachers will gain insights into education due to conversations which occur at school.

Question 2 on the shortened questionnaire (see Appendix B) permitted tabulation of results dealing with this outcome. Ten of the 11 questionnaires were tallied. One teacher chose all responses and this made it impossible to contribute to the results. Tabulation of the results indicated that 2 of the 10 teachers felt that conversations centred upon personal life. Most teachers (6 of 10) felt that conversations usually centred upon classroom experiences. While 1 of the 10 teachers felt conversations usually centered upon planning with other people, 1 of the 10 teachers felt conversations usually centred upon other topics of conversation. None of the eleven teachers felt that insights were gained about education from conversations they usually engaged in at school. A summary of this information has been planned in Figure 2.

Figure 2
Types of Conversations
Teachers Engaged In



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These results indicate that the second outcome was not met.

The third expected outcome was stated as follows:

Outcome 3. The results of the questionnaire will indicate that 4 of the 15 teachers will engage in conversations in which they plan together.

Results related to this outcome were tabulated in Question 2 of the shortened questionnaire (see Appendix B). According to the results indicated in Figure 2, 1 of the 10 teachers planned with other people. This finding does not meet the expected outcome stated for Outcome 3.

The fourth expected outcome appeared as follows:

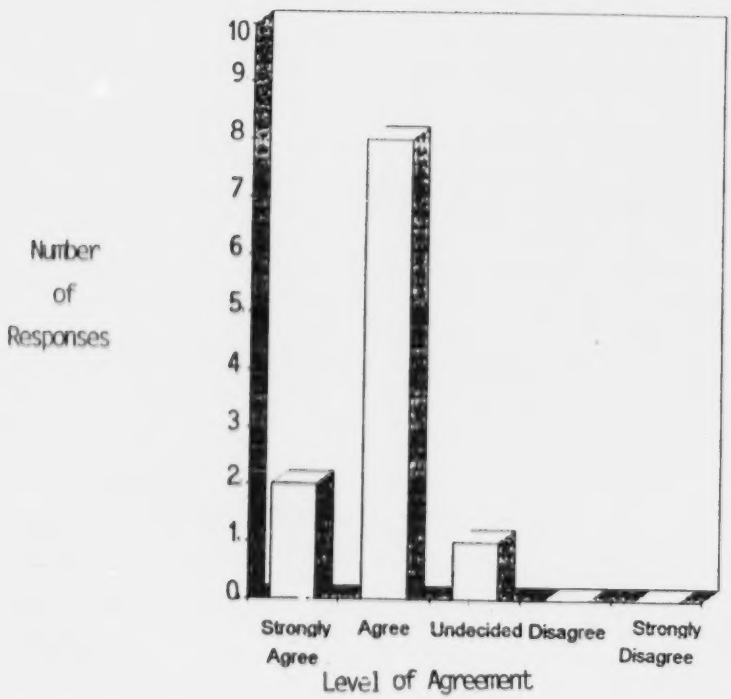
Outcome 4. The results of the questionnaire will indicate that all 15 teachers agree that the staff effectively models the type of community that would be well for children to emulate.

Results related to question 1 on the shortened questionnaire (see Appendix B) relate to this objective. Eleven responses were tallied across a range of 5 levels of agreement (see Figure 3). While 2 of the 11 teachers strongly agreed that the staff model the type of community that students should emulate, 8 of the 11 teachers agreed with this statement. There was one teacher who was undecided about the statement. None of the teachers who responded to the questionnaire disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. While 10 of the 11 teachers agreed that the staff model the type of community that children could emulate, the outcome had expected

15 responses to agree with this statement. Since four people did not return the questionnaire, it is impossible to ascertain the range of results which would have been obtained due to 100% response rate. These results indicate that Outcome 4 was not achieved.

Figure 3

Teacher Agreement re: Belief Held Concerning School Environment for Students



Discussion

The results of the questionnaire suggest that perceived increases in the number of conversations that teachers engaged in did not lead teachers to gain insights into education nor to participate in planning with other people. In other words increasing opportunities for educational discussions on a staff will not in itself lead to reflective thinking. Although teachers participated in Tea and Tidbits each week, participants did not think they gained insights into education. The question of what really was occurring permits examining the records related to the discussions. Comments from these discussions seem to relate to teacher practice. This was apparent in the comments made concerning Non-fiction Literature.

Each double space in the following dialogue notes the beginning of another speaker.

-It's critical for getting boys to read. They call it real reading.

-Girls love it too.

-Animals will get the girls interested.

-In Grade One, I read a poetry, a fact and fiction book each day. I did a research paper and I used a non-fiction book every day. I was amazed by the boys reaction. Boys who weren't interested in reading suddenly wanted to read.

-Boys are interested in magnets and experiments.

-But in Grade 1, it's difficult to find factual books that the children can read.

-It's important that they are exposed to non-fiction because as they get older they have to read textbooks. You can tell who hasn't read non-fiction. It's an entirely different process.

-It's a good way to stimulate another type of writing.

-My kids like to write fact books.

-Even the French programs,by Grade 3 has Science in it. We just finished 'Space'.

-When they finish school, this is the kind of reading that they will do. Manuals are written in such a convoluted way.

-They like "bear" books. They compare pictures and I remember one time they found the same photograph being used in two different books.

-We just did 'Space' and they found two of the same pictures in two books.

-I want to go back to the sexist thing. The girls start to look at something other than pretty books.

-Are there techniques for teaching children to look at pictures?

-The key is in the questions you ask. The relationship between the picture and the text is important.

-If you teach children to read the pictures and ask them to confirm the clues they begin to look at the text to find this and that and discover how things are linked together.

-I remember at a Reading Council meeting, the person read the information and told what was going on in her head while she was reading.

-You have to read a non-fiction book more slowly and you can stop and look at the pictures.

-Doing that in primary grades is pre-teaching the strategy for later on.

-I try to compare the books. How is it different than the other kinds of books we've read?

-A child may be good at substituting words but mean something else. It becomes really important in junior grades. There's more need to be specific in reading so pre-teaching vocabulary becomes important.

Tea and Tidbits discussion encouraged teachers to retell what they did in their classrooms. Most significant was the teacher's comment concerning research and how she came to understand the type of literature boys liked. It was through personal investigation of a question that this teacher analysed her teaching. This was an instance where she shared how to become a reflective practitioner. In order to become engaged in higher order thinking, Schwartz and Bone (1995) suggest that people should be encouraged to retell, relate and reflect during conversations. Teachers seemed to naturally engage in retelling what happened in the classroom and were involved in relating information to a theoretical viewpoint. Reflection on what really occurred in a classroom would have lead them to ask questions about their practice. This may have been introduced in comments made about gender. However, it was dismissed.

A question concerning the author's role during the discussion arises. Had the author intervened with a question (eg. What would happen if every book in your classroom was a non-fiction book?) the intervention may have caused reflective practice.

Questions about Tea and Tidbits discussion surfaced in the fieldnotes.

April 17, 1995

I'm wondering if this talk is getting us anywhere. Are we gaining insights into teaching or is it solidifying the group? Perhaps, this is the first step to opening up.

The author's belief that reflective thinking happens naturally is apparent. However, results suggest this is not the case. In Schon's work (1982), reflection is stimulated due to a questioning professor.The results of the practicum show the need to more carefully examine teacher talk.

While Tea and Tidbits may have contributed to conversations teachers held in the school, it is necessary to consider the influence that teacher candidates had on teacher talk. Since all teachers in the primary division and 4 of the 6 teachers in the junior division worked with teacher candidates, the perceived increase in discussions by a number of teacher concerning classroom experiences is understandable. However, the influence of the teacher candidates on perceived planning among staff was not apparent. The discovery that only one teacher perceived conversations centred upon planning with colleagues suggests that the teachers continued to employ a top-down paradigm in working with teacher candidates. This result is important to training teachers and Colleges of Education who are trying to establish professional development schools. While teacher

training offers teachers the opportunity to try different options of working with other teachers in a school, teachers, continue to work in traditional ways.

Fullan (1993) discusses the polarities that exist in schools. While teachers operate at one end of the pole in isolating top down models, the goal is to work in collaborative "learning organizations" (Senge, 1991).

Fullan (1993) recognizes the difficult task of change agents. Given his understanding that change agents strive to restructure schools, the finding that only one teacher perceived conversations were oriented to planning with colleagues is reflective of the reality of the contemporary school culture.

This understanding might explain why 10 of the 11 teachers who responded to the questionnaire appeared to agree with the statement that staff in the school model the type of community that children should emulate. The vision that teachers hold allows agreement to this statement but the reality is different as evidenced from the fieldnotes.

March 12, 1995

> Meanwhile conversations I've had in the past two weeks found a Grade 4 teacher popping in to discuss one of my former students. "What am I going to do?" she asked. "Her mother wants me to find the child a friend." I sympathised over the situation and we talked about possibilities. Finally, I talked about how other

children who weren't popular (girls) managed-helped in the library and office. This gave them something to do at recess and raised their social standing in the group. They're never accepted but at least they're appreciated and recognized by staff.

Isolation doesn't just happen to teachers. It happens to children. The reality of not having a friend at school is painful. It infringes on learning.

Throughout the practicum, instances of the type of community which existed in the school were recorded in the fieldnotes. Early in the practicum, interactions on staff provided a glimpse of the school culture.

November 10, 1994

The surprise painting of rooms found me working until 11:30 p.m. putting furniture back..The custodian and I closed the school. I was exhausted but had just about everything back. I screwed the shelves above the bulletin boards by myself. The next day I arranged for five teachers to take 'L's' class so that she could put her classroom back during the day. A small group of her children came into my class with journals and math work. The principal came in at lunch and told them they were to go back to class in the p.m. He said nothing to me. So male superiority hits again. His word is law. I went to help 'L' put her room back together after school and we

were both angry that the principal could make these decisions.

Throughout the year, the culture within the school did not change.

April 17, 1995

The mailboxes for teachers have been moved out of the main office and into the staffroom. Well, that sure makes a difference. The new principal and new vice principal and secretaries are in the office and the staff are in the staffroom. There's no longer a need for teachers to go to the office. Separation of power. The interaction, even small talk with administration, has stopped. The secretaries will find it harder to learn people's names. The new administration appear to be making decisions which set them apart from the staff. On one hand the Board is holding meetings about 'Leading Together' which suggests a more collaborative way of managing schools and on the other the new administration is balkinizing the staff (Hargreaves, 1994).

While teachers at the school appear to support a vision which encourages staff to foster a supportive learning community, the everyday existence within the school appears to fog the view. It is dichotomies such as these that nourish the change forces in the school (Fullan, 1993).

Considering Collegiality

Understanding collegiality requires coming to realize the process by which teachers form a supportive culture. Little's effort (1982) noted that in schools where collegiality existed teachers discussed education, observed one another, planned together and taught one another about teaching. Descriptions which characterise collegial settings give little evidence of how the environment developed. The outcomes in this practicum provide a glimpse of how collegiality may be fostered in a school. The presence of teacher candidates in a school promotes conversations centring upon classroom practice. Whether teachers would begin to plan together or gain insights into education in subsequent years requires observation beyond an eight month practicum.

Celebrating collegial environments is like looking at a cake. When one sees the product, it is difficult to ascertain what ingredients were included, in what quantities and in which order the batter was mixed. Educators may yearn for collegial settings but they have yet to devise the recipe. This practicum suggests there is promise in teachers working with teacher candidates as an initial ingredient to foster collegiality.

Recommendations

Certainly, the completion of any project allows one the wisdom of experience. This project involved a more careful scrutiny of teacher

interactions and its completion provides an opportunity to suggest adjustments for future ventures. Listed below are the recommendations that would benefit future work in this area.

Embellishing the questionnaire

Outcomes for the practicum were based on a questionnaire which was distributed at the end of the practicum. However, outcomes could have been stated according to teacher interviews which validated or negated results of the questionnaire.In other words, sharing the results with individual teachers and asking each one to provide input into why the results occurred could have determined the outcomes for the practicum. This information would have been valuable in understanding the teacher conversations that occurred and given opportunities to consider whether teachers were more insightful about practice than they perceived

Teacher Training

One of the problems which occurred during the practicum was the lack of time to discuss understanding of teaching with classroom teachers. This might have been more successful if preservice teacher candidates had been asked to record valuable teaching moments that they observed in classes and discussed their observations at the end of the day with classroom teachers. The adjunct professor could then have visited the meetings. The classroom teachers could have done the same during teacher candidate lessons.

Lunch hour meetings between classroom teachers and the adjunct professor might have been scheduled at a local restaurant. In this way, the teacher would have had an opportunity to provide feedback and discuss their observations of teacher candidates. Such discussions would have been valuable for fieldnote notations.

Focussing the practicum

While an eight month practicum appears to be an eternity for the novice investigator, this period of time is extremely short when one considers the process of change. The question of what can be accomplished during an eight month period would have lead to considering outcomes which related to teacher talk. It is also necessary to consider the influence that practitioners have in changing school culture. In other words, certain changes probably will not occur without the active support of the administration (Leithwood & Yantzi, 1990). Visualising the practicum by drawing maps before one begins might provide a more realistic view of what one is trying to accomplish given a specific period of time and this may allow areas of the practicum to surface which should be given special attention. In this way the practicum would gain depth rather than breadth. Rather than trying to change everything, it would have been more realistic to examine one part of the total picture.

Dissemination

The efforts that classroom teachers make in creating change often go unreported. However, this practicum noted attempts to foster positive interactions among classroom teachers due to the presence of teacher candidates in an elementary school. Sharing the effort can be accomplished in a number of ways.

Within the school

Fostering meaningful interactions is ongoing and if teachers are to understand that they contribute to the school culture and indeed, direct it, it is necessary to relate to the staff what the results mean. This can be done through a Tea and Tidbits session after school. This opportunity will serve to mark the road and hopefully, allow an opportunity to point the direction that staff wish to take in the future.

It will also offer a chance for the author to invite colleagues to join in presenting the practicum outside of the school. Possibilities for sharing the practicum beyond the school are as follows.

Beyond the school

Teachers joked about how Tea and Tidbits could become a book. Actually, their idea of writing a recipe/reflection booklet had merit. Staff may wish in assisting in writing accounts related to Tea and Tidbits. Proceeds from the book would be used to purchase classroom materials.

Each year, in June, the Canadian Society for Studies in Education

meets on a university campus. In 1996, the conference will be held in the province where the practicum was conducted. With staff permission, volunteers could form a panel of practitioners to present the practicum and results at the conference. Given that most people who attend the conference are employed in teacher training or graduate studies, the addition of the practitioner's voice would add a valuable component to the conference and would permit acknowledgement of practitioners' efforts in teacher training as well as furthering the understanding of collegiality.

Finally, the insights which relate to collegiality may be of interest to the academic community and may benefit future work. The practicum serves as background for articles related to professional development and school reform. Publication of ongoing efforts by practitioners in schools adds credibility to practitioners' lives. Since this practicum sought to foster meaningful interactions among teachers, it appears that in order to truly live out this vision, it is necessary to add the voice originating in teacher practice to the literature.

Teacher isolation can be considered an educational cancer. In order to cure it, it will take the efforts of many, working in alternate ways. The ongoing fight will be successful if these efforts are recognized. Teachers can realize that they do not have to be victims of isolation but rather, can practise prevention through initiating collegial conversations. Collegial endeavours such as this practicum serve as examples of practical initiatives

that teachers may recognize. Working with teacher candidates has the potential of planting the seeds to foster growth in collegial staff relations.

"Seeds are symbols.
They speak of our past
And if we let them...of our future."

(Grol, 1995)

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APPENDIX A

ORIGINAL TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Teacher Communication/Isolation Questionnaire

Many believe that it is essential for schools to be warm supportive environments for teachers and children. This questionnaire seeks to find out the extent to which you perceive this to be a reality in our school. Would you kindly complete this questionnaire and return it to me after the weekend? Your support is truly appreciated. Thank for your co-operaiton.

Betty

Please check the number of years you have taught.

0 - 1 year ____ 2-5 years ____ 5-10 years ____ 11 years & more ____

Please circle the level of agreement which best matches your response.

1. Classrooms are private places in which a teacher works with her/his students.

strongly agree | agree | undecided | disagree | strongly disagree

2. Very few people know what goes on in my classroom.

strongly agree | agree | undecided | disagree | strongly disagree

3. Schools are organized to encourage teachers to work together.

strongly agree | agree | undecided | disagree | strongly disagree

4. If I were troubled by a personal problem, there are people in this work setting with whom I could be comfortable in sharing this in the confidence that they would be understanding and supportive.

strongly agree | agree | undecided | disagree | strongly disagree

5. If walls were torn down in schools, teachers would work together.

strongly agree | agree | undecided | disagree | strongly disagree

6. Teachers at this school are encouraged to learn from one another.

strongly agree | agree | undecided | disagree | strongly disagree

7. I would welcome more opportunities to talk informally with like minded "others" about professional issues.

strongly agree | agree | undecided | disagree | strongly disagree

8. We as a staff effectively model the type of community that it would be well for our children to emulate.

strongly agree | agree | undecided | disagree | strongly disagree

9. When I'm not in my classroom, I usually talk to: (choose one)

administration ____ colleagues ____ special ed. staff ____

French teachers ____ librarian ____ custodian ____

office staff ____ parents ____ other people ____

10. On the average, how many times/week do you have meaningful interchanges with other members of the staff: (choose one)

once/week ____ 2-4 times/week ____ 5-8 times/week ____ more than 8 times/week ____

11. Conversations I engage in at school usually center upon: (choose one)

personal life ____ classroom experiences ____

planning with other people ____ gaining insights into education ____

other ____

12. How many of these interchanges concern professional issues? (choose one)

1-3 ____ 4 or 5 ____ 6 or 7 ____ 8 or more ____

13. The place where I am most likely to talk to someone at school is: (choose one)

in the staff room ____ in the hallway ____ in my classroom ____

in the office ____ at the xeroxing machine ____

in the parking lot ____ on the playground ____ on the telephone ____

APPENDIX B

FINAL TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Teacher Communication/Isolation Questionnaire

This year, I have been especially interested in the environment that teachers and children share while at school. Many believe that it is essential for schools to be warm, supportive environments for teachers and children. This questionnaire is a shorter form of the September questionnaire that you completed. Would you kindly complete this questionnaire and return it to me before the weekend? Your support continues to be appreciated. Thanks for your co-operation.

Betty

Please circle the level of agreement which best matches your response.

1. We as a staff effectively model the type of community that it would be well for our children to emulate.

strongly agree | agree | undecided | disagree | strongly disagree

2. Conversations I engage in at school usually center upon: (choose one)

personal life | classroom experiences

planning with other people | gaining insights into education

other

3. How many of these interchanges in one week would concern professional issues? (Choose one)

1-3 _____ 4 or 5 _____ 6 or 7 _____ 8 or more _____

APPENDIX C

SPECIFIC CALENDAR

Specific Calendar

Month #	Name	Week	Professional Co-operation Activities	Tea and Tidbits Topics	Teacher Training	Shared Space Partnership
1	Nov.	1		Spelling:Approaches & Ideas		plan activities
		2	Response to Portfolios	Power Rangers & Censorship		write newsletter
		3		Developing Student Social Skills	observe practice teachung	
		4			preservice teacher reflection	
2		1		Assessing Students		
	Dec.	2		Concrete Examples of How to Manage Behavior	observe practice teaching	
		3		Feedback re: Preservice Teacher Experience		
		4			place preservice teachers	plan activities
3	Jan.	1		Timeout: What Does It Mean?	introductions: new preservice teachers	write newsletter
		2		Values in Education		
		3				
	Feb.	4	Spelling & Parent Ed. Prep.		observe practice teaching	plan activities
4		1		Topic Suggestions		write newsletter
		2		Alternatives to 'Time Out'		
		3			practice teacher reflection	
	March	4		Printing:Do We Teach It?		plan activities
5		1		Report Cards	observe preservice teachers	write newsletter
		2			practice teacher reflection	
		3		Editing Children's Writing		plan activities
	April	4		Teacher Frustration:Survival		write newsletter
6		1		Teacher Sanity/Wellness		
		2			preservice teacher reflection	
		3		Leading Together:Teacher Definition		
	May	4		Non-Fiction Literature		
7		1		The Common Curriculum:Ministry Doc.	observe preservice teachers	
		2			practice teacher reflection	
		3		Feedback re: Preservice Teacher Experience		
		4			submit perservice teacher reports	plan activities
8	June	1				
		2			written feedback re: model	write newsletter
		3	Circulate questionnaire to teachers			
		4	Theatrical Performance for children/ Teacher Administration			

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